

## RAIN-SOAKED VOLUNTEERS CLEAN UPPER IOWA RIVER

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CRESCO - The Upper Iowa River played host to an armada of canoes, as scores of volunteers came to clean its waters, despite heavy rains throughout most of the weekend.

The Fourth Annual Upper Iowa River Cleanup took place Saturday, Sept. 24. Volunteer crews worked on four different river cleanup routes covering approximately 30 river miles stretching above Kendallville and below Bluffton, removing garbage and enjoying the Upper Iowa's beautiful limestone cliffs. Another crew, through consultation with Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) officials, wielded chainsaws to remove dangerous snags, for future users.

"We had a great event with amazing volunteers," said program coordinator and northeast Iowa resource conservation and development forester, Richard Kittelson. "In the few hours that they were on the river (until concerns of lightning forced routes to be shortened). They made a significant impact."

More than 100 people volunteered this year. They removed enough garbage to fill nearly two 10 wheel dump trucks, with only 1/3 being non-recyclable. Their trash treasures included tires, 55 gallon barrels, a hide-a-bed, camp chairs and fishing supplies, a fuel oil tank, many beverage containers, a hog feeder, and Mardi Gras beads.

The Upper Iowa River Cleanup began in 2002, when roughly 20 people helped beautify the waterway. The program has grown every year since and aims to highlight the importance of water quality and natural resources stewardship. This event brought folks from all across Iowa as well as from surrounding states.



"It's a great event that brings a great diversity of volunteers," said Peter Komendowski, a return volunteer working alongside a group ranging from Luther College students to retirees. "The organizers make this event one that welcomes and accommodates everyone from avid paddlers to families to students. I love this part of the state and really enjoy this event. I'll definitely be back next year."

In return for their time spent cleaning up the river, volunteers received free breakfast and lunch, free camping Friday and Saturday nights, and free canoe use during the event. Local businesses donated prizes for a drawing - including gift cards, a child's rod and reel, clothing, coupons and more.

"The combination of partners that came together to organize and support these volunteer efforts really speak to the depth of dedication toward protecting this river," said Cathy Engstrom of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, one of this year's new partners. "There are many great projects we've all done individually; it was exciting to do this together."

Donors and sponsors include: Norby's, Ozzie's Outdoors, Upper Iowa Marine, Fred Carlson Company, Happy Joe's Pizza, Mabe's Pizza, Decorah Pizza Hut, Agora Arts, Gallery of Tops, Hotel Winnesheik, Oneota River Cycles, Decorah Bicycles, ACE Hardware-Decorah, Kephart's Music Center, Decorah JD Implement Co., Decorah Hatchery, T-Bocks Sport Bar, Wal-Mart, ACE Hardware-Cresco, Camp Site RV, The Plantpeddler, Subway-Cresco, Cresco Pizza Hut, Cabela's Inc., Oneota Community Food Co-op, Waving Grains Bakery, Fareway, Subway, Mike's Fruit Market, Quillin's, Casey's (Freeport, Decorah and Ossian), Pepsi Distributing, Kwik Star, Featherlite Inc., Cresco Union Savings Bank, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Spectrum Recycling, Decorah Tire, McAfric Scrap Metal, Rockweiler's Appliance, Chimney Rock Canoe Rental & Campground, Harvest Farm Campground & Canoes, and the Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation & Development.



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